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## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FORCES IN WAR

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It is my purpose to set down briefly some impressions of war in its economic and social aspects. My observations are limited to a section of the war zone from which the Germans retreated last March. As an ambulancier I have had abundant opportunity to travel over this region, penetrating to the front lines over roads closely guarded day and night, or driving back into the interior *en repos*. Also I have seen parts of France untouched by the despoiler's hand.

My first, and perhaps strongest, impression is that war creates an entirely new environment. The moment I stepped from the train at a point in the war zone where we got our ambulances I felt that I was in a new world. Old things had passed away. There was a certain indefinable atmosphere about the place that could be felt, if not described. Hundreds of army wagons were parked near the station. Every passing vehicle was painted war-gray and driven by a man in uniform. War *aéroplanes* hummed overhead. In the distance the rumble of big guns could be heard. A soldier with a bayoneted rifle stood guard as we passed out of the station-yard. Organized civil life had vanished. The few civilians I saw looked strangely out of place, and their meek demeanor indicated that they were there by sufferance. In stores civilians quietly stood back until soldiers had made their purchases. All rights were with the military. All thinking, all conduct, all existence was militarized.

As we left this town for the front and I studied this environment more closely I felt that it was one of maladjustment. Things were being perverted from their original and natural use. Wide areas that had formerly been fertile fields were growing up in weeds, from which flocks of quail started as we drove past. Trenches zigzagged

their sterile way across wide spaces. Villages that had once been the home of prosperous farmers were in ruins, and the ruins were alive with men and horses. Often men were quartered in old barns, and horses in what was left of houses. Not a few lived in dugouts or bombproof shacks. It was a return to primitive conditions before man and nature had adjusted themselves to one another so as to produce modern civilization. It was plainly a reversion, and such a reversion means stupendous waste. Horses, carts, wagons, and motor trucks that might have hauled farm produce were used to haul men and ammunition to the front. No expense, no cost was being spared to achieve the great end.

In this general maladjustment of man to nature, man is the loser. Instead of changing nature to meet his needs, he must accommodate himself to nature—and that a perverted nature. In short, he must return to the animal level. Man differs from lower animals in that man changes nature to suit himself; animals must accommodate themselves to nature as they find it. If it is cold, man builds a house and installs a steam heater; a squirrel puts on a heavier coat of hair. One is called active adaptation; the other is called passive adaptation. Now, in war man descends to passive adaptation. He digs in the ground for his own protection. He learns to crouch along the edge of an exposed road, or to lie on his belly in a ditch when the shells are falling. He is a victim. He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains. Physical force reigns. When he seeks an *abri* from falling bombs he feels like a rabbit seeking the brush when a gun is discharged. And only men who learn best to adapt themselves to these new conditions survive. If a man cannot squeeze into a ditch or refuses to do so, he runs a heavy risk of being killed by shrapnel. It is passive adaptation that counts. Man first perverts nature, and then adapts himself to this perverted condition.

Thus far I have written rather disparagingly of war. But there is another side to it. And first of all, war forces upon men rigorous standards of living. A sharp line is drawn between necessities and luxuries, which in itself is a valuable contribution. Then luxury is relentlessly suppressed. Once-luxurious limousines whisk by, painted a war-gray and carrying high army officials. One can

easily imagine the former owners of these cars now walking or marching in file. Soldiers and civilians alike must come to plain living—food, clothes, shelter, amusements. Army food is well-balanced and nourishing, but not fancy. The quality and cut of a soldier's uniform are for service. Shelter is just what the place affords. We have slept in barns, stables, woodsheds, wrecked houses, and many times in our ambulances. My shaving mirror has hung anywhere from the branch of a tree to the rear end of a *camion*. Our worldly possessions we carry in one duffel bag each, which must be turned bottom up and its contents dumped in a heap when anything is wanted. Thus we grow inured to the simple life, and learn that a suite of elegant rooms, attendants, expensive dinners, and motor cars are not necessary to human existence, or even to human satisfaction.

Again, production is no longer primarily for profit but for service. In this particular region private enterprise on a large scale is prevented by physical impossibility. I have seen large sugar refineries in ruins and used only to house ambulances and *brancardiers*. I have seen tons upon tons of rusty shafting and wheels lying in heaps where fire had left them. What private production remains is small-scale and is so regulated that profit is reduced to the minimum. The government becomes the chief producer as well as the chief consumer. On *ravitaillement* we back our motor up to a train of cars. One car is filled with loaves of bread, of a quality to meet the needs of soldiers and also to conserve wheat. Another is filled with barrels of *pinard*. Others are filled with cabbage, lentils, coffee, sugar, salt, etc. Meat we procure from a kind of Fifth Avenue motor bus converted into a traveling meat store. No money changes hands. Our French commissaire obtains an order and proceeds to get our rations for the day. It is all on account of the French government. It is a species of communism—a military communism where each soldier receives his allowance for the day. Perhaps more accurately, it is a kind of paternalism.

Out of it all will remain the idea that production should be looked upon as a social process and for social ends. That would not necessitate socialism, but it would necessitate the social point

of view in private enterprise. Large manufacturers would have to recognize that they could not run their factories solely for profit without any considerations of social welfare. They are social agents. They hold their organizing ability in trust for society. If by chance a young man inherits millions, he has no right to drop productive work and begin to consume his wealth upon himself. There should be no duplication of production with a view to cut-throat and wasteful competition. Prices of public necessities should be under some form of public control. In these and other ways production could be socialized without socialism.

That leads to another consideration: War socializes all life. By some writers war is classed as an anti-social force, and from one angle it is. But viewed in its effects upon any group war is socializing. A socializing force is one that develops in the individual a social point of view, a social feeling, and social will. It develops a new and larger self. Whether or not that new self is a metaphysical entity existing *in vacuo* I am not concerned to discover, but I think it is not. It is rather a new attitude. There is an individual attitude, and there is a social attitude. One concerns the individual solely; the other concerns other individuals also. So far as the economic phase of life is concerned it has already been dealt with, but life is more than economics.

Let us take such a simple example as marching. There is not only the cadence, but also the length of step and covering in file. If an individual soldier should attempt his own individual length of step, his own cadence, his own position in file, there would be an irregular and ragged marching body. One must co-operate. One must submerge his individual preferences. Personally I may not prefer a thirty-inch step or the regulation cadence or to keep my head up and eyes forward, but I must conform. I must learn to get the marching "sense," and more or less unconsciously to swing along in good form. The change is in me and in my fellows. A new attitude and a new power have been developed in us. A larger self is the result. My marching self is larger than my individual self. It extends out and touches my fellows. It is my social self in one of its functions.

Marching is an elementary part of war, but the principle is just the same. Throughout there must be the closest co-operation. The artillery must co-operate with the infantry. Aëroplanes must co-operate with the artillery. Ambulances must co-operate with *brancardiers*. No individual can follow his individualized way. He must become militarized and follow the military way. The army is his larger self. He must learn to respect authority, obey implicitly, and co-operate. He must develop what is called "social efficiency"—the thing that makes team play possible.

War is a stern teacher, but if it teaches men "social efficiency" traits it will not have been entirely in vain. The mastery of man over nature depends upon more social efficiency. Progress is better adjustment of man to nature, and of man to man. The second must come first. The adjustment of man to man is just what we have called socialization. Therefore, the first step in further mastery of nature—invention, increased production—is socialization. War disciplines men for this first step. I do not mean that life should be militarized, but militarization is a splendid foundation for socialization. It develops the traits necessary, but it also develops some undesirable traits not found in socialization. That nation, therefore, which succeeds best in developing social-efficiency traits, that is, in socializing its members, will forge ahead fastest. If socialization necessitates socialism, then socialism will come. Socialism is socialization on its economic side institutionalized, and during war institutionalism must prevail. But after the war socialization might remain without any formal institutional expression. But there can be no doubt that war with its widespread socialization paves the way for socialism.

A final social aspect of war that I note is idealization. Sociologists have long appreciated the value of idealizing a situation in order to render it attractive and turn it to account as a social force. Nowhere is this more necessary than in war. An effective *casus belli* must be presented to soldiers before they can be stirred to do their best. The ideal case is self-defense. To repel an invader appeals to every man. Almost equally effective is to make out a potential and prospective invasion and the necessity of anticipating

it. Catch-phrases such as "Remember the Alamo," "Remember the Maine," "Remember Louvain," "Make the World Safe for Democracy," etc., generalize a situation and idealize it so that only one side appears. The other side is wholly in the wrong. In effectiveness they fall only a little below the catch-phrase of the crusaders, "God wills it."

War itself is pictured in attractive colors. Wisely attention is not drawn to the sordid work of killing men but to the heroism of risking one's life in a noble cause. War decorations are multiplied for conspicuous bravery. In this present war the lack of glamor is made up for by an extra supply of decorations. Practically every man who is wounded in the French army receives a *Croix de Guerre*. The idea is good. It exalts a soldier's life by according it social recognition. When a soldier with a war decoration walks along, every eye notes the ribbon or medal, and every heart pays tribute. It means that he has faced danger, risking his life for his country, all without thought of personal profit. Just today I witnessed an inspiring ceremony in the town square when a cousin of the king of England decorated ten French soldiers. It took place in the presence of the civil and military population, and was carried out with dignity and impressiveness. Rank with its appropriate insignia has the same effect. When a man with stars on his sleeve comes by, soldiers come to a dead halt, click their heels, and salute. It warms the cockles of the general's heart, and sets an example for emulation.

Could not this principle of idealization which is so useful in war be used in civil life? Could not social recognition be attached in some way to production for service? Could we not give some mark of distinction to a manufacturer who used his surplus income to further increase production—to build additional factories, hire more labor, and lower the prices of his goods? As it is, many persons use their surplus income on "conspicuous waste." Thereby they hope to attain distinction, and they do. But it is all wrong. Reward should be given for "conspicuous" production. I fear that colored ribbons, stars, and medals would not serve the purpose. They belong to a primitive wonder age when beads and shells adorned the body. War being a reversion, these baubles suffice,

but the tastes of an industrial society are different. No mechanical device need be considered anyway so long as the thought of the people remains as it is. In a society where "conspicuous waste" is admired, a button for "conspicuous" production would only single out a man as a mark—an eccentric individual with a hobby. New social ideals must be created. Nor can it be done by propaganda alone. War with its production for service is helping immensely. The social mind has undergone a marked change within the past three years. Thousands of American manufacturers have offered their plants to the government. Heavy taxes take surplus incomes. Waste is being socially tabooed. Production and saving are popular. It is a great gain. It is almost worth the price. I write that advisedly and with the expectation that it will be challenged. I hope it will. My chief desire is to provoke thought, and not to settle anything.

Thus this war is extremely important for economists and sociologists. It reveals social forces in action. Such tremendous organized power is back of it that environments can be changed overnight, new adjustments made, and an entire situation changed in a fraction of the time required in peace. It comes as near a social laboratory in which social reactions can be studied and even produced artificially as anything yet attained. If it is wise to send military experts to study military strategy, would it not be equally wise to send social experts to study social reagents and reactions?